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Why do you believe in civic engagement and volunteerism? Support your answers with examples from your personal experience.

Throughout history there have been several leaders that have impacted the world but only a few have been as dramatic as Martin Luther King Jr. The United States is what it is today because of the influences from Dr. King. His passion and drive to create equality truly made a difference. Since others have followed his lead, we now have a more understanding and accepting nation. The intentions of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech were once just a way to get to a more understanding nation but eventually became so much more than that. I truly believe that to have a well-rounded community or town you need people involved in everyday processes within that particular community. Civic engagement is not only vital in making a town run smoothly, but is also crucial in the town's success. His dream has inspired many individuals to follow what they believe is right, such as enlisting into the army or even serving on their child's school board. It is a personal goal of mine to serve on the school board or city council board. Voters who elect these individuals have a voice in decision-making, but the act of serving is civic engagement that inspires others and provides self-gratification. Thus, I believe those who volunteer or help others, reap rewards and success at some point in their life. Dr. King's passing has now allowed success for others and his "civil rights" accomplishments are unforgettable.

When a citizen decides on how to help the community many people choose to volunteer. Volunteerism is a major part in making something great, such as the Big Brother Big Sister program. Individuals that mentor the younger ones not only learn the importance of volunteerism, but also make a difference in the lives of younger students. Studying and communicating with others provides remarkable experiences for both Bigs and Littles in the program. This program represents students (Littles) working together with their Big, sparking

new friendships that provide guidance and inspire them to reach their potential. This civic engagement experience helps curtail violence and hatred of some sort, which may be a normal part of their life. At present, I am not in the Big Brother Big Sister program at Janesville this year, due to scheduling, but I hope to be a part of this organization next year, because I know the impact it has on so many people.

While my involvement in school activities including: Volleyball, Basketball, Speech, and Color Guard have helped make me a well-rounded individual, I have many years ahead of me. Regardless of my schools demographics, it is nice to be involved in activities and not be judged. Students here feel safe. I am thankful for my freedom of speech and civil rights. I feel valuable as a member of the activities I am involved in. WE ARE A TEAM! Dr. Kings words sum up my feelings best, "As we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together..." Our differences are set aside and support comes from all angles: peers, teachers, parents, community. This example of civic engagement is something to be proud of.

Civic engagement outside of school is also necessary for success within our school district. At my church, for example during the advent season each confirmation student, including myself, has to find a mentor that helps by offering advice and wisdom pertaining to daily challenges and life situations that my peers and I may face. After having a mentor that I could confide in has really helped me through certain situations that I could not have dealt with on my own. Knowing someone who understands and has been through the same conditions I have been through makes me a stronger and wiser individual than I was before.

I believe in Dr. King's beliefs, "the diverse cultures of today don't need violence or hatred; they need encouragement to lead us to new heights of prosperity and possibly one day, a time when differences do not receive unwanted comments or criticism." Through Dr. King's dream, it is hopeful that our nation will realize that the unwanted comments and criticism will be diminished making the world and our communities a better place to live. Civic engagement and volunteerism will certainly enhance our successes and bring to life a celebration of our diversity.